

STEM Advisory Council Broadband Committee

9/24/13

Talking Points

Why do we need access to and expansion of broadband for Iowa education? (All require significant broadband capacity.)

- To support the nearly 150 school districts that offer **1 to 1** access to laptop computers or other Internet-ready devices for daily instruction. (connections with STEM experts and resources; flipped classrooms)
- To assist in the expansion of **Iowa Learning Online** (the Department of Education's virtual learning program) in providing STEM and other course opportunities to students who might not otherwise have access to these rigorous, engaging, and collaborative courses. (slow downloading of video and materials – loss of student engagement)
- To facilitate the best use of the soon-to-be-released PK-20 portal and repository of online resources and opportunities which is called **Iowa Learns: Digital Resources for Teaching and Learning**. This portal will be available to house STEM and other resources and courses provided by, the Department of Education, Area Education Agencies, Iowa Public Television, Community Colleges, Colleges and Universities, Workforce Development, and other Iowa education partners. (a vehicle for digital literacy)
- To support the **Continuity of Learning**, which would provide students and teachers with access to their school's digital curriculum in cases of school closure resulting from severe weather, pandemic occurrences, or emergency situations. (Singapore – bird flu – trained & simulated)
- To provide equity and opportunity to all PK-20 Iowa students and educators, regardless of their location or economic circumstances. (rural students – same opportunities)
- To support Iowa's Education Reform efforts, including teacher professional development and mentoring and school district reporting and assessment efforts.

What do we need and what can we do?

- Provide incentives for access to **affordable** high-speed broadband and stable Wi-Fi networks available to all schools and homes. (could be public-private partnerships)

- Advocate for standard connections supporting **speeds of not less than 50-100 Meg**, with a target of 1 Gig. (set the bar high)
- Take a **deeper look** Iowa's Broadband access and speed maps, targeting funding and incentives toward areas most in need.
- Even though a point of access exists on the map, it does not necessarily translate into universal access. Investigate **actual access** and determine whether the existing fiber is dark or lit.
- For schools that are unable to find an affordable local provider for satellite buildings or in some cases, no means of access at any cost, **create a plan** for providing assistance and/or an alternative course of action that would create a connection to their main hub.
- Support current streamlining of school district E-Rate applications and **increased E-Rate funding** that provides discounts for schools and libraries and an additional separate funding stream for home use.